FACT, OPINION & STANCE: CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

TASK 3: Here are definitions of the terms ‘fact’, ‘opinion’ and ‘stance’ – decide which category of answer was prompted by the question types noted in Task 2.

**FACT**: something known or proven to be true.

**OPINION**: a personal belief or appraisal, based on insufficient evidence to allow certainty.

**STANCE**: a position on a certain issue, based on consideration of evidence, often expressed publicly.

TASK 4: Discuss with a partner: Of facts, opinions, and stances, which are most common in the following text types and why?

a. A university essay
b. A newspaper article
c. A self-reflection
d. A letter of recommendation

TASK 5: Highlight the facts in the following excerpt, and underline the points which are the author’s interpretation or stance.

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**English as a lingua franca**
by Barbara Seidlhofer
ELT Journal
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*excerpt*

In recent years, the term ‘English as a lingua franca’ (ELF) has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first languages. Since roughly only one out of every four users of English in the world is a native speaker of the language (Crystal 2003), most ELF interactions take place among ‘non-native’ speakers of English. Although this does not preclude the participation of English native speakers in ELF interaction, what is distinctive about ELF is that, in most cases, it is ‘a contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication’ (Firth 1996: 240). […]

Despite being welcomed by some and deplored by others, it cannot be denied that English functions as a global lingua franca. However, what has so far tended to be denied is that, as a consequence of its international use, English is being shaped at least as much by its nonnative speakers as by its native speakers. This has led to a somewhat paradoxical situation: on the one hand, for the majority of its users, English is a foreign language, and the vast majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve any native speakers of the language at all. On the other hand, there is still a tendency for native speakers to be regarded as custodians over what is acceptable usage. Thus, in order for the concept of ELF to gain acceptance alongside English as native language, there have been calls for the systematic study of the nature of ELF—that it looks and sounds like and how people actually use it and make it work—and a consideration of the implications for the teaching and learning of the language. […]

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TASK 6: Find the mistakes made in students’ reporting of this article in their essays:

a. As Crystal (2003) reminds us, around 25% of the people who speak English around the world are not native speakers of English.

b. Firth (1996) assumes that ELF is used between speakers of other languages who often do not share any cultural background.

c. Seidlhofer (2005) believes that ‘native speakers are regarded as custodians over what is acceptable’ in English.

d. Seidlhofer demonstrates that ELF is a ‘contact language’ used between speakers of other languages (2005).

e. Seidlhofer contends that there are voices calling for a more detailed assessment of the forms of ELF so that more concrete conclusions can be drawn regarding its relevance for teaching English in future (2005).

Further Reading & Practice